

**USING SOCIAL
MOBILIZATION
TO SUPPORT**

A black and white illustration of a group of diverse girls of various ethnicities looking intently at a book held by one of them.

EDUCATION

Girls'

Project Design No. 9

USING SOCIAL MOBILIZATION (SM) TO SUPPORT GIRLS' EDUCATION

WHY INVEST IN GIRLS' EDUCATION?

Investing in the education of girls yields high economic and social returns. Education, especially primary schooling, contributes to economic growth, social development, and democracy. Schooling makes individuals more capable of learning on their own, acquiring new skills in the workplace, making good decisions, and participating responsibly in civil society. While the education of all children is important, investing in the education of girls produces high social and economic returns. Female literacy and schooling have been linked to development gains in maternal and child health, agricultural production, and a drop in fertility.

Despite enormous gains, girls' completion rates still lag behind those of boys. Many countries have engaged in comprehensive changes in their educational systems to expand access, improve instructional quality, and increase efficiency. These programs have laid the fundamental groundwork for increased educational participation of all children, but they usually have not been sufficient to reduce existing gender disparities between girls and boys. The fact that many of the impediments to girls' enrollment and persistence in school are specific to girls and not to boys requires a concerted effort to increase educational opportunities for girls. It is a developmental imperative.

The private sector can create solutions. Overcoming the variety of barriers to girls' education requires the leaders of society to become active participants in implementing solutions to specific problems. Because of their role in determining human resource requirements for the future, influencing public opinion, and mobilizing rapidly to confront important issues, leaders from business, media, religious groups, and local organizations can play a vital part in improving girls education and, thereby, in strengthening their country's resource base. These characteristics make businesses ideally suited to address barriers outside the classroom, particularly economic barriers faced by thousands of families.



ONE POSSIBLE ACTIVITY IN A SOCIAL MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN: ORGANIZED PROTESTS. THIS PICTURE IS COURTESY OF CEDPA AND WAS TAKEN ON CLEAN DELIVERY DAY IN NEPAL 1996.

WHY INVEST IN SOCIAL MOBILIZATION?

Social mobilization recognizes that changing practices, attitudes and beliefs about educating girls requires more than top-down policymaking or simple add-on programs. Social mobilization provides an effective means to examine obstacles that deter or discourage girls' education and generate appropriate responses to them. Social mobilization goes beyond raising awareness to mobilizing communities in support of girls' education initiatives.

A community must be fully engaged in designing any interventions that are meant to overcome local barriers. No single factor explains the barriers that keep girls out of school, make them leave early, or prevent them from completing primary education. So, a simple public message campaign is insufficient for a complex community change. Successful social mobilization occurs when communities identify their own problems, and then assume responsibility to plan, manage, control, and assess the activities that they have decided will create change. Social mobilization on behalf of girls' education also ensures that progress is sustainable. Social mobilization goals include not only increasing awareness and knowledge, but also organizing and motivating people to change their behavior.

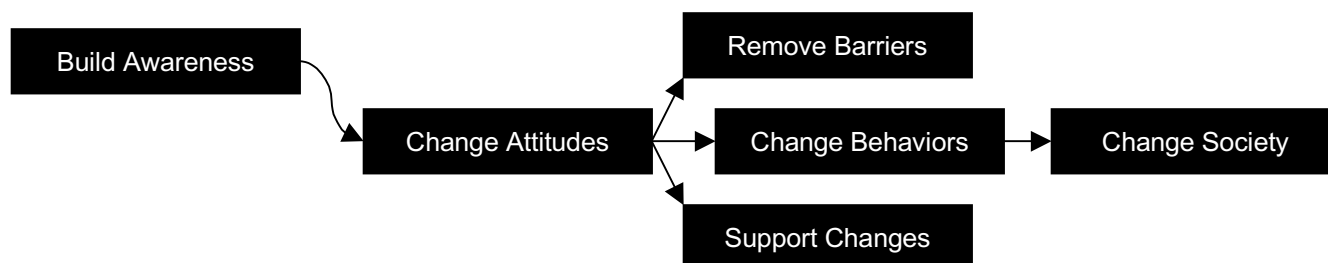
WHAT IS SOCIAL MOBILIZATION?

Social mobilization involves planned actions and sustained processes to reach, influence, and involve all relevant segments of society across all sectors from the national to the community level to create an environment that results in positive behavior change.¹ As defined by UNICEF, social mobilization is a broad scale movement to engage people's participation in achieving a specific development goal through self-reliant efforts. Social mobilization is a dynamic, long-term process in which stakeholders use a number of strategies, such as policy advocacy and social marketing, to make sustainable changes in the community.

At its heart, a social mobilization movement seeks societal change. Societal change is a complex endeavor involving interactions of various people and groups who hold different attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Because of these differences, changes made within one of these groups do not necessarily lead to changes

¹ Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA).

throughout the society. To bring about systemic change for girls' education, community members must do many things, such as (1) build a common awareness across society of the need for girls' education, (2) convince people of (change beliefs about) the value of girls' education, (3) remove societal barriers to instituting girls' education, and (4) find support and resources for making changes. In other words, the



general order is:

In social mobilization, the approaches are always multifaceted, which is why they are often referred to as ***social mobilization campaigns (SMCs)***. SMCs use many different activities at all societal levels to convince all sectors of society that educating girls is in everyone's best interest. For instance, some community leaders may hold meetings in their town with each family to convince parents to keep their girls in school. Other community leaders may work as advocates at the national level, to put in place a national mandate for girls' education.

The more and varied the approaches used, the better the chance for societal change. Wherever possible, a campaign will mobilize national policy- and decision-makers, government institutions, organizations in the private sector, as well as international organizations. Although a national policy environment conducive to girls' education goals is helpful, community ownership of the initiative is the key to success. An effective SMC on behalf of girls' education can be initiated by a local business network, religious organization, or NGO. Figure 1 shows some of these different levels and actors in SMCs.

The scope of an SMC can vary according to available funding, personnel and target population. Campaign initiatives use a wide variety of strategies and resources to get results: radio programs reach rural parents in Peru; and dramatic performances raise awareness of the need for girls' education within communities in Malawi. In the prefecture of Kaback in Guinea, community members identified a vendor who would sell school supplies at a reduced rate.

Social Mobilization...

- Is a multifaceted, multilevel, community-based, sustained effort to address an identified community need;
- Begins with community members, preferably from different groups, planning and engaging in projects to address the need;
- Derives its strength from its diversity of members and its decentralized and more sustainable nature;
- Takes time and persistence in building connections, mobilizing people, and supporting them as they organize into groups; and
- Facilitates change by mobilizing and empowering people and groups to do projects to meet the identified need.

Outside supporting groups or funders may provide information and support for initial efforts to bring the community together, but do not direct the community efforts. For example, an organization may recognize a need for girls' education in a community. Funders may then financially support a community meeting around the issue of girls' education (e.g., by paying for transportation of community members to the meeting and for a facilitator to keep the group focused). The funder would not, however, be involved in any decision-making. Community members would determine community needs. Once a need is determined, the funder may assist the community in supporting multiple approaches to address the need and help to build their social mobilization campaign (SMC).

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A SOCIAL MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN

Step 1: Assessment. Successful social mobilization requires an assessment of the enthusiasm and commitment of local communities for girls' education. Community interest in promoting girls' education may already be apparent or it may need to be fostered through public awareness campaigns. Organizations and individuals that already are working for girls' education in a target area can assist in assessing the level of readiness for mobilization activities. Government ministries that have community field staffs responsible for social affairs, health, or women and children can be contacted for their knowledge and expertise. Advocates for girls' education in intermediary-level organizations may play a pivotal role in identifying the problems for girls in the country. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are in a unique position to work locally to assist communities to clarify and agree on expectations.

Step 2: Build alliances. The wider the coalition of participants involved in the SMC, the easier it will be to reach a significant number of people and make changes in how they advocate for girls' education. The business sector, religious organizations, service clubs, and many other institutions within the community can assist the process, if not through funds, then through volunteers and materials. Local radio, newspapers, and other media can be enlisted to help increase awareness. In the initial stages as well as throughout the program's duration, it is useful to ensure that influential people and organizations, village chiefs, civil and religious leaders, parents, and students, are kept abreast of activities and are consulted for advice and support.

Interested individuals could form a formal alliance to provide the SMC with overall direction, including program goals, scope and measures of success. Inviting school officials and parents into the local alliance could help set realistic expectations for the SMC. The type of alliance that is formed, the amount of funding that is available, and the expected time frame will be unique for every community. Successful social mobilization depends on partners having shared goals and maintaining communication.

Step 3: Understand the local obstacles to girls' education. A successful campaign from one community cannot simply be "adopted" in another. Inquiry should be undertaken locally to understand better the nature of the specific obstacles facing girls' education and who makes the decisions that have an impact on girls' education. This information not only helps to select approaches, but also can indicate where new alliances can be made. NGOs, businesses, religious organizations, women's groups and other organizations can support this process.

Step 4: Implement a program. SMCs are urged to start small and grow gradually, expanding what works and revising what does not. Decisions should be guided by information collected locally. If available, data from a national task force on girls' education can also be helpful. One characteristic of social mobilization

programs is their ability constantly to redesign what they do on the basis of current experiences. A program idea can be tried a couple of times since trial and error are integral to the continuous improvement cycle of SMCs.

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance, and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan, and to act. PLA is a community approach to solving community problems. PLA uses culturally respectful techniques, encourages participation from all community members, and does not depend on the ability of participants to read or write. PLA relies on spokespersons identified by the community. To engage community members in thinking about school participation, for example, a focus group of villagers is asked to respond to the question “Which girls of school-going age are going/not going to school?” in a way that produces a reliable final count. The facilitator may draw a map of all the houses in the community and talk about the girls in each house and where they are during the day. In addition to yielding good data, PLA increases community involvement and strengthens the village’s commitment to the implementation activities they will undertake.

Choosing to test a project before expanding, however, does not mean starting without the full participation of as many stakeholders as possible. Any program, regardless of its size, should try to involve all opinion leaders who make up the local support system, including those who may have doubts about the initiative. Village chiefs, civil and religious leaders and parents should be included right from the start.

Step 5: Build your campaign. Continuous improvement implies that the initial stages of planning, implementation and monitoring are repeated regularly as an SMC develops. Effective implementation of an SMC requires ongoing efforts to provide field workers with knowledge and experience in community development, participatory planning, training, and evaluation. Social mobilization workers must earn a high level of trust within communities to work effectively on behalf of girls’ education.

While ensuring that field staff receive the ongoing support to help local communities meet their goals, SMCs should also be prepared to welcome new partners into ongoing planning and implementation activities. SMCs are likely to attract attention as the successes of community programs become known.

Social mobilization programs benefit from the building of alliances. In Malawi, for example, a girls’ education campaign did not initially involve coming-of-age “initiation counselors.” When the planners realized this group’s importance to improving girls’ chances to stay in school, however, they redesigned the campaign to include them. The contribution made by these counselors was essential to meeting some of the campaign’s primary goals by helping to incorporate pro-education messages into initiation songs, redeveloping initiation teachings to be more appropriate to different age groups, and changing the scheduling of ceremonies to occur during school holidays. Because of social mobilization, initiation practices can now create a widespread awareness of why girls need an education (GABLE SMC, 1998).

Step 6: Monitor and assess the campaign. Ongoing monitoring maintains the momentum of an SMC and contributes to accountability. Planners should always keep several questions in mind to assess progress: Is the program being implemented effectively? Is the program meeting the objective of the SMC? What difference is the program making in the lives of girls? Monitoring and assessment show which approaches are the most successful and how they can be adjusted, improved, and expanded. Since data at the community level are regularly gathered as part of the participatory style of mobilization programs, field workers are in a good position to provide planners with feedback about progress, unexpected problems, and results achieved. An

SMC must plan to assess the impact on girls, including the changes in rates of enrollment, drop out, and achievement. By documenting its success, an SMC continues to build community involvement and be a focus for additional resources in support of girls' education.

A KEY LESSON

Although interaction with communities takes far more time than simply providing services, it is the ingredient that gives social mobilization its extra power. A community that sees a local project as someone else's agenda is not likely to have the commitment or lasting involvement to make it happen. Maintaining a partnership approach with the community throughout the course of any SMC is the key to success.

HOW SHOULD FUNDS FOR THE CAMPAIGN BE ALLOCATED?

An SMC should initially explore what low-cost and no-cost means of support are available for each aspect of the campaign. For example, important contributions to improving a school's infrastructure can be inexpensive. The most cost-effective strategy is to involve organizations that have the experience that is needed. Partner organizations can contribute time, materials, funds, services, and expert technical assistance.

It is impossible to suggest a typical budget, given the many variables within a specific target area that will affect costs. However, in estimating most budgets, consideration must be given to costs of communication, transportation, personnel and supplies. Partners may be able to cover some of these costs, and creative thinking may lead to the leveraging of additional local resources to support the campaign. If donor agency funds are available, they can be helpful for some of the more expensive "start-up" phases of a campaign. Effective social mobilization activity is possible regardless of the funds available, as shown by the following examples:

- A modest amount of money can underwrite door-to-door community awareness building activities or sponsor a play-writing contest and award prizes to students for publicizing the advantages of staying in school;
- At little or no cost beyond the initial development of a manual, local volunteers in Uganda are trained to identify and implement plans of action with parents to improve the quality of local education.
- A regional social communication plan to promote girls' education in rural Guatemala used radio, theater and posters at a cost of (US) \$31,000;
- Significant funds were available for Malawi's GABLE SMC. This national campaign supported a wide range of related activities, including training workshops, community focus-group discussions, song-and-dance competitions, drama performances, radio programs, calendars, t-shirts, and newspaper inserts. Funds were also available for local construction projects, like building a bridge that had been washed away, so that girls could continue to attend school.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO IMPLEMENT A SOCIAL MOBILIZATION PROGRAM?

A local social mobilization activity has four phases: local identification of needs and solutions, planning, implementation, assessment and improvement. Because of the differences of geography, distances and available staff from area to area, each stage could have vastly different timetables. A discrete community

activity, like constructing school latrines and wells, could be accomplished within several months, while a larger campaign involving multiple goals and target areas would require more time. Social mobilization campaigns can be viewed as peaks in a continuous process rather than as a discrete event with a beginning and an end.

SUMMARY

When people are unaware of the advantages to the family, community and country to educate girls, and when girls are needed to work for the family, social mobilization programs can help create awareness and change. The keys to the success of social mobilization programs lie in the wide spectrum of alliances that are formed in support of girls' education and the face-to-face interaction that takes place in local communities. The scope of mobilization programs can vary, depending on the number of partners involved, the amount of funds available, and the timeframe for the activity. To be fully successful, an SMC must become an ongoing, self-sustaining movement involving those who are most affected by it.

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- Creative Associates International, Inc., Washington D.C publishes a series of eight booklets on the GABLE Social Mobilization Campaign:
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- The Republic of Uganda, Ministry of Education. 1997. Community-mobilization Training Manual. Kampala: Ministry of Education.
- Southbound & Third World Network. McKee, Neill. (2000). Social Mobilization & Social Marketing in Developing Communities: Lessons for Communicators. Available for purchase at (with Chapter 5 on-line): <http://www.capside.org.sg/souths/sbsb/title/smsm-cn.htm>

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION...

For more information, contact your ministry or department of education for a list of schools and organizations working in education in your region.

Web sites:

1. Action Learning International at <http://www.imc.org.uk/imc/al-inter/>.
2. Action Learning Outcomes Journal at <http://www.openhouse.org.uk/virtual-university-press/alo/>.
3. Goshen College's WEB Links to Participatory Action Research Sites at <http://www.goshen.edu/soan/soan96p.htm>.
4. USAID Publications page at http://www.dec.org/usaid_eval/.
5. USAID Homepage at <http://www.usaid.gov/>.

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1. *Enhancing Girls' Education through Community Schools*
2. *Improving the Physical Environment in Support of Girls' Education*
3. *Investments that Yield High Returns: Scholarships for Girls*
4. *Using Incentives to Promote Girls' Education*
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